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CATHOLIC EDUCATION: York Region school forced to close doors due to poor air quality

Mould problem closes school

BY PATRICK CASEY
 Staff Writer

The discovery of toxic mould has closed a Catholic elementary school in Aurora for the rest of the school year, forcing the board to find a temporary accommodations for 540 students and their teachers.

The York Region health department ordered the separate board to close Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School Friday afternoon, two days after independent tests confirmed more than a dozen strains of both stachybotrys atra and aspergillus inside the 13-year-old facility.

The two varieties of mould are proven to be the most damaging to people, causing health problems ranging from watery eyes and dry throats to severe migraine headaches and coughing that can trigger asthma attacks.

Gwenda Trimble's three children have faced a series of health problems since arriving at Our Lady of Grace last September after the family moved from Richmond Hill, but she questioned whether the closure was just a knee-jerk reaction to a topical problem.

Although her 10-year-old son Michael missed two straight months of class with a respiratory ailment, and daughter Allison often feels lousy by the end of the week, Trimble is hesitant to blame the mould entirely.

"I would have had no problem sending my kids to school today because nothing has been proven to me," said Trimble, who booked off work yesterday when her daycare arrangements fell through. "I know my kids have had a

lousy winter, but what's the long-term exposure?"

"The schools in Toronto are a lot older than the schools in York Region and they are not closing. I'm wondering whether the school board and health departments are trying to look like knights in shining armour when there are only six weeks of school left. We are now in a peak period of ventilation, and is the situation that dire now that all the students have to be removed?"

"Why not wait until the end of June? Nobody has answered that," she added.

Earlier this year, the health department instituted a zero-tolerance policy for mould after the Catholic board began an invasive testing program at all of its portables and relocatable structures.

That protocol was followed once the mould was found at Our Lady of Grace, said health protection division director Oryst Zyhar.

"We work with the school board and they work with us. In this case, the board has scheduled the school to be closed."

"You can't have occupancy of the building while the work is being done. When you are taking apart one entire hallway and then cleaning it up, it can't be part-time. If you are going to do it, you do it all at once."

"There is a ton of drywall... and that's the problem," said local teachers union president Ihor Baczynsky. "You wouldn't think you have it in these structures, but it's mostly around the water sources."

"The health department is doing the right thing because they are under a tremendous amount of pressure to keep

the school open. You can't compromise the safety and health of students for fiscal responsibility."

The Catholic board spent the last three days determining where students would spend the final six weeks of school, and board chairperson Elizabeth Crowe said a contingency plan was to be announced during an information meeting with parents last night.

"It's been very disruptive for the students, but the board didn't have a choice. The health department said close it, so we closed it," she said. "We called everybody in and we have to abide by the results."

"You can get into a big debate over it, but what would be the result? You just end up dividing the community. The one frustrating thing is that there's no consistency across the province. I've been told that windows are rotting out and mould is growing in the Toronto board, but nothing is being done there. But I'm not a doctor or a bio-chemist and I don't know the effects of mould."

To date, the board has spent \$1.2-million on testing and refurbishing portables throughout the system.

In April, the school board unveiled a three-year, \$150-million blueprint for construction projects that will create 12 new schools and 18 permanent additions.

Included in the plan is the replacement of 14 relocatable portapacs plagued with poor ventilation, damp walls, ceilings and floors and drafty conditions that have the ability to create a cesspool for mould.

**The Regional Municipality of York
 NOTICE OF WORKSHOP #2**

Ninth Line Improvements From The Proposed Highway 407 Crossing To Main Street (Stouffville)
 Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (Schedule C)

Cole, Sherman & Associates Ltd. has been retained by the Region of York to undertake a study to recommend improvements to Ninth Line from the proposed Highway 407 crossing to Main Street in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

The purpose of this project is to alleviate existing and anticipated future traffic problems associated with development in the Towns of Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville. As part of this study, the elimination of road jogs at bisecting east-west roads have been considered as well as investigating improvement options for the existing intersection at Main Street.

This project is classified as a Schedule C undertaking by the Class Environmental Assessment for Municipal Road Projects (Class EA). Once this study is complete, an Environmental Study Report will be compiled and placed on the public record.

Public consultation is an essential part of the planning process and workshops have been incorporated in the public consultation plan for this study.

The second workshop session has now been arranged. The purpose of this workshop is to present the evaluation of alternatives considered and the recommended plan. This workshop has been scheduled for:

Thursday, May 20th, 1999

7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

The Canada Room

Markham Civic Centre

101 Town Centre Boulevard, Markham

Comments and information regarding this study are welcome to aid in the planning of this undertaking. This material will be maintained on file for use during the study. With the exception of personal information, all comments will become part of the public record.

If you have any questions or require additional information please feel free to contact:

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*Come To Church
 On Sunday*



Parkview Village
 12184 Ninth Line South
 Stouffville

Sunday, May 23rd, 1999

Parkview Talent Sunday
 7 p.m. - Auditorium

VIVIAN BAPTIST CHURCH
 473-3543
 On Hwy. 48 at Vivian Rd.
 Pastor Robert Okum
 Holding forth the doctrines of grace

9:45 a.m. - Sunday School
 11:00 a.m. - Morning Worship
 7:00 p.m. - Evening Service

Everyone is Welcome

DURHAM COMMUNITY CHURCH
 invites you to come out and
 worship with us
SUNDAY 10:30 a.m.
 Enjoy a warm welcome, fun & fellowship
 At Altona - 5460 Sideline 30
 640-4356

STOUFFVILLE UNITED CHURCH
 34 Church St. N. 640-1163
 Worship Minister: Rev. Robert Nightingale
 Education Minister: Nancy Montelth
 Sunday, May 23rd, 1999
 10:30 a.m. Worship Service
 Sunday School from Baby Fold to the Grade 8 level
 Everyone Welcome

Springvale Baptist Church
 Stouffville Rd. at Kennedy Rd.
 887-5651

Senior Pastor: Bob Flemming
 Associate Pastor: Bill Thornton
 Associate Pastor/Student Ministries: Brian G. Simcoe
 Worship & Music Co-ordinator: Heather Thornton
 Children's Ministries Co-ordinator: Sharon Russell

BLOOMINGTON GOSPEL CHURCH
 13660 Ninth Line
 (South of 47 Highway formerly Bloomington Rd.)
 Pastor: Dr. John Howarth

Sunday, May 23rd, 1999

9:45 a.m. - Sunday School
 11:00 a.m. - Rev. David Knight
 6:30 p.m. - No Evening Service

Everyone Welcome

WIDEMAN MENNONITE CHURCH
 10530 Hwy. 48 - North of Major Mackenzie Phone: 640-6219
 Interim Pastor Henry Regehr
Sunday, May 23rd, 1999

9:45 am - Christian Education
 10:45 am - Speaker: Harold Chamberlain
 7:00 pm - Harold Chamberlain
 "How to prepare for year 2000"
 Everyone Welcome

Sunday, May 23rd, 1999

ONE SERVICE ONLY
 10:00 am
Celebration Service
 Pastor Bill Thornton

NO SUNDAY SCHOOL
 6:00 p.m.
NO EVENING SERVICE
 Wednesday at 7:00 p.m.
Kids Clubs

For more info call Church Office

STOUFFVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH
 A Fellowship Church
 6273 Main Street
 Asst. Pastor - Gordon MacCormack

SUNDAY, May 23rd

10:00 a.m. Bible Class
 11:00 a.m. Family Worship Hour
 Message - Pastor MacCormack
 Music - Jim Dickerson

Advance Notice
 Sunday, May 30th - Guest Ministry
 Robert & Alma McAllister
 Music from "The Golden Melodies Band"
 Don't miss this opportunity to hear the
 "McAllisters" and "The Band"
 "True Compassion is Love In Action"
WE CARE

THE ANGLICAN PARISH of CHRIST CHURCH
 254 Sunset Blvd., Stouffville
 The Rev. Robert A. Shields 640-1461

*Celebrating 120 years of ministry
 1879-1999*

Sunday, May 23rd, 1999
 The Day of Pentecost

8:00 a.m. Holy Communion
 10:00 a.m. Choral Eucharist
 with
 Church School & Nursery provided.

Everyone Welcome!